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ABSTRACT

This synthesis report examines the 30-year history of educational change to identify differing perspectives, strategies, and adoptable principles. Three influential perspectives in educational change have been: (1) the rational-scientific perspective positing that change is created by dissemination of innovative techniques; (2) the political perspective (the top-down approach) bringing about change through legislation and other external directives; and the (3) cultural perspective (the bottom-up approach) seeking to influence change through encouraging value changes within organizations. Change strategies are as varied as the perspectives propelling them; they encompass fixing the parts (through curricular or instructional innovations), fixing the people (through training and professional development), fixing the schools (through organizational development), and fixing the system (through comprehensive school restructuring). Long-term success has not been achieved by any of these methods. Comprehensive school restructuring offers the most promising new direction for educational reform and incorporates elements of the other three strategies. (Contains 46 references.) (Author/MLH)

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SCHOOL CHANGE MODELS AND PROCESSES

A Review of Research and Practice

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and

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United States Department of Education

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SCHOOL CHANGE MODELS AND PROCESSES
A Review of Research and Practice

Marshall Sashkin and John Egermeier
Office of Educational Research and Improvement

This synthesis report examines the 30-year history of educational change in order to identify differing perspectives, strategies, and ultimately, adoptable principles. Three perspectives that have been most influential in educational change are: 1) the rational-scientific perspective which posits that change is created by the dissemination of innovative techniques, 2) the political perspective (the "top-down" approach) which brings about change through legislation and other external directives, and 3) the cultural perspective (the "bottom-up" approach) which seeks to influence change by encouraging value changes within organizations. The strategies used for change in schools are just as varied as the perspectives that propel them: the aims are to 1) fix the parts (curricula, teaching methods), 2) fix the people, 3) fix the schools, and 4) fix the system.

On the whole, long-term success has not yet been achieved by any of these methods. However, by examining the limited success of these approaches we can better understand how to undertake effective educational change through a fourth, more recent approach, called "comprehensive restructuring." This cultural change-based approach incorporates elements of both political action and scientific-technical innovation, drawing in aspects of all three perspectives. It also incorporates elements of the other three strategies. Comprehensive restructuring holds the most promise for successful systemic change by means of a new "wave" of educational reform.

Our purpose in this analysis and synthesis is to trace broad patterns in thirty years of research on changing schools. Our goal is to tease out some guiding principles to help those designing and creating New American Schools and AMERICA 2000 Communities. We first define three fundamental perspectives on how and why schools change. Each perspective makes certain assumptions about why people change and what drives change. Next we examine four broad strategies for bringing about change in schools. The strategies are grounded in one or, in some cases, a combination of the three perspectives on change that we defined first. Each of the four strategies includes a variety of tactical approaches, and we review research that tells us whether and how well certain tactics and strategies work. Finally, we try to show how three of these strategies, representing the conventional modes of improving schools, are or can be incorporated within the fourth, providing a strong foundation for change by integrating the three perspectives on change, allowing them to reinforce one another.

We must warn readers that our review is selective. It represents how *we* think of the history of educational change over the past thirty years or so and how *we* see major trends and "movements" or "waves" of reform. We have tried throughout to observe Einstein's

dictum: "Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler." Some critics believe that we have failed, by oversimplifying, but we disagree. The issue may be one of perspective. That is, our aim is to explore forests rather than classify trees. We trust that readers will consult other sources to verify any questionable points and to fill the gaps in this brief survey.

Three Perspectives on School Change

There are many different approaches to the study and practice of change and improvement in schools. These varied models often have different underlying assumptions and values about change. But, despite these differences, all of the approaches reflect one (or more) of three broad **"perspectives"** on the change process. These three perspectives derive from classic research on change (Chin & Benne, 1969) but have been modified by House (1981) to better fit education systems. House speaks of: (a) the ***rational-scientific*** or ***R & D*** perspective, (b) the ***political*** perspective, and (c) the ***cultural*** perspective.

From the late 1950s to the 1970s the **rational-scientific** perspective was dominant, especially for those involved in Federally-sponsored research and improvement programs. This perspective on the change process is straightforward, if simplistic. It assumes that if people are given valid information that empirical data show would, if applied, lead to improvements, then they would apply that information. One example is the set of curriculum development and diffusion programs sponsored by the National Science Foundation. These new curricula were developed by experts, tested, validated, and then disseminated to potential users who, it was assumed, would adopt and use them as designed.

The **political** perspective was especially prominent in major top-down State-level reforms that followed the shift in initiative from Federal to State levels in the early 1980s. This perspective was demonstrated, for example, by strong external policy controls derived through processes of bargaining and political compromise among power groups. The most simplistic version of this perspective was to mandate certain changes and outcomes, often by law. It was then assumed that the changes would be made. A more sophisticated version of the same political perspective involves those in top-level power positions formally "waiving" various controls and requirements if lower-level agents (schools or districts) can demonstrate that certain desired conditions or outcomes are being achieved. In their extensive analysis of the use of policy for school change and improvement McDonnell and Elmore (1987) describe four "policy instruments" used by States: mandates, inducements, capacity building, and system changing.

The **cultural** perspective emphasizes changes in meanings and values within the organization undergoing change. Cultures change as a consequence of the actions of leaders who "transform" their organizations. This has become a dominant perspective or metaphor of major school redesign and restructuring efforts in the 1990s, reflecting current approaches in the business sector (Moorman and Egermeier, 1992).

Four Operational Strategies for Improving School Performance

The three broad **perspectives** on change in schools form a backdrop for understanding the nature and use of certain **operational approaches or strategies for change**. We will review four such strategies. Each represents an attempt to invoke one or more of the three perspectives. That is, a particular strategy may focus on one of the three perspectives, drawing on it as a primary force for change, while making use of one (or both) of the other perspectives to provide added strength.

The four operational strategies for change are:

(1) ***fix the parts,*** which involves improvement by adopting proven innovations of various types;

(2) ***fix the people,*** through training and development;

(3) ***fix the school,*** by developing school organizations' capacities to solve their own problems; and

(4) ***fix the system,*** by reforming and restructuring the entire enterprise of education, from the State department of education to the district and the school building.

We will review each of the four strategies, focusing on strengths and weaknesses. To keep this review within practical limits, we will cite only a few key research studies dealing with each strategy. In concluding we will show how the first three strategies come together, in the form of the fourth strategy, in a way that builds on the strengths of each by drawing on all three of the perspectives on change defined above.

Strategy 1 — Fix the Parts: Transferring Innovations

The focus of this first strategy is on the transfer and implementation of specific educational innovations. These programs may involve specific curricular content, such as new materials for teaching English or mathematics. Or, the focus might be on practices, for example, the way teachers present materials to students or the way school principals act to become "instructional leaders." Thus, the idea is to fix the ineffective or inadequately-performing parts of schooling by implementing one or another new idea that, if used properly, will produce better results for students. This strategy is based mostly on the rational-scientific/R&D perspective.

For at least a third of a century there have been concerted efforts to study and perfect the processes by which teachers and administrators learn of and adopt new programs and practices that lead to educational improvements. Most large-scale studies on how to get educators to adopt specific innovations were conducted in the 1970s, using Federal funds.

The Pilot State Dissemination Project (PSDP; Sieber et. al., 1972) was one such study. It set up "dissemination agents" in three States. Their roles were modeled on two concepts.

The first is that of the "county agent" of the Agricultural Extension Service, who serves as a personal communication link between researchers and their innovations (such as hybrid corn) and farmers. The second conceptual basis was the general model of social linkage for dissemination of innovations developed by Havelock (1969). That work provided a detailed and research-based conceptualization of the role of the linker, the "county agent." PSDP agents served not the entire State but a county or a school district. The project was successful. There was much more effective dissemination of information in the targeted counties and districts. Effective adoptions were quite clearly related to the level of interpersonal contact between the agent and the users. In fact, the dissemination agents often acted to provide not just needed information but extensive technical assistance, helping teachers and administrators to deal with and solve specific problems. But, given the labor intensive nature of PSDP, the costs were so great as to make this effective approach untenable as a national strategy. A rough estimate of the cost of maintaining an "agent" in each of 14,000 school districts today would be about one billion dollars per year.

On the heels of PSDP, from 1973 to 1978, the Rand Corporation conducted a national study of four Federally-funded programs centered on innovative practices. One gave general support for local innovative projects. A second supported district bilingual education. The third centered on new approaches to career education. The fourth and final program funded local efforts to eliminate illiteracy. The study examined a total of 293 specific projects. The findings were disappointing at best. The amount of money and effort invested in a project made little difference. Neither did the specific project content, because, for the most part, the specific innovations were adapted and changed, not simply adopted, by users. Outside consultants and one-shot, packaged training approaches tended to fail miserably. Even when there were some positive effects, they tended to dissipate over time and when Federal funds ended.

What worked? Broad scope and ambitious aims seemed to help, especially when meshed with strong leadership, high motivation and involvement of teachers, and long-term support. In retrospect, McLaughlin (1989) observes that "it is exceedingly difficult for policy to change practice." She adds, "Implementation dominates outcome," and goes on to assert that "policy cannot mandate what matters. What matters most ... are local capacity and will." Finally, McLaughlin notes that "local variability is the rule; uniformity is the exception." In other words, one cannot expect innovations to be adopted, only adapted.

A third study (Horst et al., 1975) examined a very different approach, Project Innovation Packages — complete innovation "packages" representing approaches to compensatory education in reading and math. Developed locally and proven effective, the packages were designed to be implemented by teachers with no other information or assistance. The results were generally negative. At best, teachers implemented the packages mechanically and adapted them so much that there appeared to be little difference from prior practice. An evaluation study suggested that the concept of packaged innovations be reconsidered.

In contrast, a number of studies of the dissemination of innovations have come up with favorable (if generally modest) results. This happens most often when information about the innovation is augmented by various forms of additional assistance or support. This is seen in a 1976 study of the Department of Education's National Diffusion Network (NDN).

NDN disseminates (to schools) curricula and programs that were locally developed and have been proven to work. In each State a State Facilitator provides some assistance to individual adopters. In other words, NDN is a highly specialized version of the Pilot State Dissemination Project, focused on connecting users with one specific set of innovations — programs that have been "validated" through a formal review process. Like PSDP, NDN has proven to work rather well in getting information to users. NDN also has a strong track record in producing specific changes in school practice, at a moderate cost. Emrick and Peterson (1978) observe the "evaluation study concluded that the NDN represents one of the few highly successful Federal efforts to make wide-scale use of important developmental improvements in educational state-of-the-art."

The PSDP and NDN findings are consistent with those obtained by Louis, Rosenblum, and Molitor (1981), in the NIE sponsored Research and Development Utilization (RDU) program. The RDU program, operating from 1976 to 1979, attempted to link educational R&D results to local school improvement efforts in over 300 schools in 20 States. The program went well beyond the NDN and PSDP efforts in that extensive technical assistance was planned and provided at every step, so that the dissemination and adoption process became more of a true "problem solving" process than a simple adoption of innovation. Evaluating the outcomes, Louis and Rosenblum (1981) concluded that "a well designed dissemination strategy which emphasizes the provision of high quality information, technical assistance, and small amounts of funds to local schools can be effective in promoting improvements in schools, in educational practice, and in benefits to students."

The final dissemination of innovation study we will mention began while the RDU program was winding down. The results of this "Dissemination Efforts Supporting School Improvement" or DESSI study were summarized by Crandall and Loucks (1983). The DESSI study examined a variety of Federally-supported approaches for increasing adoption and use of innovations. The study involved "nearly 150 schools [in] attempts to improve education by introducing and implementing innovations." Overall the outcomes were weak, consistent with those of the Rand study, which examined projects where Federal funding of local innovation was the external stimulus or "agent" of change (McLaughlin, 1989). However, Crandall and Loucks found more positive results when there was high local involvement *and* extensive contact and assistance from "personal change agents," including support materials. In a retrospective analysis Crandall (1989) emphasized the positive outcomes and the practical feasibility of the dissemination strategy. Nonetheless, he also observed that transforming complex social systems involves "a mix of persistence, passion, politics, people, and knowledge." He went on to conclude that "knowledge is a weak lever in this process . . . . Nonetheless, it is the one around which we all ply our trade."

While Crandall comes to a (mildly) optimistic conclusion, we wish to take note of a less positive viewpoint presented fifteen years earlier by House (1974). Reviewing several technical innovation attempts, House produced a scathing denunciation of the dissemination of innovation approach, showing how the internal politics of school systems resist and defeat any external political, top-down force for innovation. Despite this, House correctly predicted the Federal Government's continued efforts to support this approach to improving schools, an approach that could not, in his view, succeed.

There have been several attempts to use a dissemination of innovations approach to effect "comprehensive school-level change. Most often the approach is to gain acceptance and adoption of multiple school innovations, all at the same time, with the idea that this will lead to change in the school as an entity, a "system." We will review four such approaches: Ford Foundation's Comprehensive School Improvement Program (CSIP; Ford Foundation, 1972); the Experimental School Program (ESP; Doyle, 1978); the Individually Guided Education (IGE) program developed at the University of Wisconsin's Center for Education Research (Klausmeier, 1990); and, what has come to be generally known as the "effective schools approach" (Bossert; 1985; Corcoran, 1985; Edmonds, 1979).

The Ford Foundation's Comprehensive School Improvement Program (CSIP). This 1960s program emphasized staff development strategies to change educational structures and introduce "a sufficient number of . . . new practices to create a critical mass — a chain reaction of change that would overcome the inertia of school systems and produce significantly different educational institutions." (Ford Foundation, 1972, p. 9) Thus, not only would an entire school undergo change, it would act as a spark to ignite change efforts throughout a school district, even a State, and, ultimately, the effects would be felt throughout the nation. The foundation sponsors and staff, however, underestimated the complexity and cost of supporting such a program. They found that changes were much more likely to "take" if the school was small and had a relatively simple organizational structure. Moreover, they conclude, ". . . changes in practice were effective only within the existing classroom-oriented parameters of project schools. The limited outcomes of CSIP strongly suggest that a program aspiring to be 'comprehensive' must look beyond the manipulation of variables within the school, and reckon more directly with outside factors such as financing, parent expectations, and local social and political pressures. The more fundamental the changes . . . , the more central such issues become." (p. 40)

The Experimental Schools Program (ESP). This federally-supported program, initiated in the early 1970s, was an "attempt to introduce broad, effective and lasting change" in schools, to test the viability of a comprehensive approach to change (Doyle, 1978). Program designers, however, vastly underestimated the complexity of the task, while overestimating the capability and appropriateness of direct Federal staff involvement in shaping local change efforts. Doyle concludes, "Many of the problems . . . could have been predicted. . . . But the knowledge educators have about barriers to change and about facilitators of change is usually ignored by both local and federal actors. Change cannot be launched successfully at the same time it is being planned." (p. 98)

Individually Guided Education (IGE). Our third illustration of an attempt to disseminate a school improvement model and process extended over a period of fifteen years, beginning in 1964. The IGE program (Klausmeier, 1990) was built up of carefully researched and tested components, including a tested dissemination strategy that led to State-wide adoptions and implementation in many States by the late 1970s. The program was widely acclaimed and used, until Federal support for professional development and technical support activities was withdrawn. The cost of sustaining the IGE program in State and local contexts (which remained fundamentally unchanged) was simply too great to be borne locally or by States without continuing Federal support. Even so, there still exists a small voluntary network of IGE schools that provides training for school staff.

Effective Schools. The fourth illustration represents a special type of innovation. The effective schools approach is aimed at creating social-organizational change, not just a set of technical changes (such as a new curriculum, new equipment, or new teaching techniques). In the 1970s a body of research and practice knowledge began to form, commonly called the "effective schools" literature. Developed originally out of the groundbreaking work of scholar/practitioner Ron Edmonds (1979), this literature identifies a set of characteristics of exceptionally effective schools, such as strong leadership, clear school-wide goals, and a safe and calm physical environment that facilitates learning. Later studies added to and focused this set of characteristics (e.g., see Bossert, 1985; Corcoran, 1985). There is little doubt, today, that exceptionally effectively schools are, indeed, correctly characterized (as Bossert, 1985, observes) as having

- a safe, secure climate conducive to learning;
- expectations among teachers that all students can succeed;
- an emphasis on basic skills and on time spent in learning activities;
- clear instructional objectives and measures;
- strong leadership on the part of the principal.

As has been the case for other, more narrowly-defined "technical" innovations, we find that simple adoption of school improvement models is, first, not easy and, second, not likely to result in dramatic improvements in student outcomes. There has been considerable effort by those who would change and improve schools toward inculcating some or all of these (and/or other, similar characteristics) in schools that are not especially effective. The hope has been that by instilling these characteristics a school's effectiveness will increase. But after reviewing results of a variety of studies Bossert (1985) concluded that "there is no single formula for combining these ingredients [the characteristics] into a successful school program . . ."

Looking at the same research but analyzing them at a deeper level, Corcoran (1985) came to a similar but more sophisticated conclusion. He observed, "It is not simply the presence or absence of these characteristics that accounts for the effectiveness of a school. The norms, rules, rituals, values, technology, and curriculum combine to create a culture of achievement, a press for excellence. This is the 'ethos' . . . or climate mentioned in other effective schools studies as a critical factor in their success."

It seems that what must change is not just a practice (a new pedagogical style), a curriculum element (a new approach to teaching science), or an organizational characteristic (such as a safe climate). What must change is more difficult to get hold of: the ethos or culture of the school. We will return to this issue repeatedly, in discussing the next three strategies. Meanwhile, a recent General Accounting Office study found that effective schools concepts have, in some form and to some extent, been adopted more or less systematically in over one half of all school districts in the United States (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1989). This is not the result of any directed dissemination of a carefully

prepared program but the outcome of the sort of complex processes we will discuss in terms of our fourth strategy. The GAO study concluded that the rapid spread and use of the effective schools research concepts is being achieved through a largely uncoordinated array of supports, including Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 funding and technical assistance at the local level from State Education Agencies, the regional educational laboratories, higher education institutions, and others. The impact of these effective schools programs on school and student performance is now being studied in a U.S. Department of Education project.

To a degree, the problem of disseminating the effective schools approach exists because, as Miles (1992) asserts, the effective schools approach is not simply an innovative program. In his terminology it represents what Miles calls a "grounded vision" that must be adapted before being adopted. This leads to many different versions of effective schools. All share most of the same basic culture and characteristics but all also differ in ways usually minor but occasionally substantial. Although the effective schools approach has not been a panacea, it has enlightened those who would change schools for the better, by highlighting both the issues and the pitfalls in trying to change the cultures — the set of shared values and beliefs held by people — of social systems. We shall see these problems played out more fully and, in some cases, to greater positive effect when we turn to other of the four strategies to be reviewed.

> ***Summary: Dissemination and Use of Innovations in Education.*** We have reviewed some important studies of this essentially rational approach to getting new knowledge into practice. What they say is that the more that dissemination consists of stand-alone information, the less likely it is that potential users will actually adopt innovations. In contrast, the more dissemination involves a sort of Agricultural Extension Service model, with personal assistance and continuing support from a skilled and knowledgeable local "agent," the more likely that the innovation will be used (in some form) and that the use will be of long duration.
>
> These (and other) studies tell us that a *purely* rational-scientific approach does not work well. Adding some political (policy) force can, as McLaughlin observes, increase the chances for success, but the costs of doing so appear to be very great, the short-run benefits minimal, and the long-term outcomes arguable. However, adding elements from the cultural perspective — personal support and expert assistance from a friendly outsider who can be counted on to "be there" over the long run — increases the effectiveness of this knowledge dissemination strategy. Even a relatively low-cost investment in this regard seems to pay off handsomely.
>
> The focus on how to link new knowledge to schools has shown that this aim is attainable, has demonstrated various effective ways to do that, and has proven that there are some real if limited benefits. A broader issue is whether this strategy actually leads to sustained *school* improvement that results in improved *student* achievement. Studies examining this issue are still in process but the best evidence is that even when transferring innovations works it does not seem useful as a lever for dramatic, sustainable school-wide improvement.

Research results on the above four and other school-level improvement approaches that were undertaken as dissemination projects seems to us consistent with research on the "fix the parts" dissemination approach. Successful adoption of innovations is far more complex and costly a process than had been first imagined. When coupled with the great complexity of whole-school change, such efforts falter. And, when true costs are figured in, the "relative advantage" of these school improvement approaches (over the status quo) becomes less impressive.

Strategy 2 — Fix the People: Training and Developing Professionals

The idea here is that improved educational outcomes are best achieved by first improving the knowledge and skills of teachers and administrators, making them better able to perform their assigned roles. This professional development strategy typically reflects the rational-scientific perspective but it may also incorporate a cultural perspective. Two basic sub-strategies are, first, teacher and administrator pre-service (college level) training and, second, teacher/administrator in-service training. Special provisions for bridging between those two forms have also been developed, in the form of collaborative pre-service programs and formalized induction programs.

Most research has focused not on whether "developed staff" proceed to improve the educational enterprise but on how to develop staff. One exception is the recent work of Fullan (1990), who attempts to link staff development to institutional development, that is, "changes in schools as institutions that increase their capacity and performance for continuous improvements." Fullan identified three approaches to staff development. First, and based in large part on his own early research, staff development can be used to gain adoption of innovations. This is not surprising considering the findings we just reviewed on the most effective ways to dissemination innovations. That is, staff development can be seen as another way to provide intensive personal support to those who could adopt, or are in the process of implementing, an innovation. Of course, Fullan points out that this works only when the staff development activity is well-designed, is conducted effectively, and teachers are shown how the innovation relates to improved student outcomes. Fullan concludes, "staff development, implementation of innovation, and student outcomes are closely interrelated, but because they require such a sophisticated, persistent effort to coordinate, they are unlikely to succeed in many situations. Any success that does occur is unlikely to be sustained beyond the tenure or energy of the main initiators of the project."

Second, Fullan observes, staff development can be considered an innovation in its own right. As such, when effectively implemented and maintained it would lead to improved performance on the part of teachers and administrators and subsequent improvements in student outcomes. "New policies and structures that establish new roles, such as mentors, coaches, and the like, are and can be considered as innovations," Fullan points out. He reviews research on mentor programs, to show that such staff development activity is more likely to be adopted and effective when considered explicitly as an innovation. Fullan also notes that even current researchers tend to treat mentor-based staff development not as an innovation but as a strategy for introducing other innovations. But whether treated as a strategy or an innovation, the impact of mentoring — like staff development in general — "will be superficial and short-term and will be confined to a few participants."

Staff development, in Fullan's model, links classroom improvement to school improvement. The former is based on improvements in curricular content, instructional strategies, instructional skills, and classroom management. The latter is founded on a culture with four crucial characteristics: collegiality; shared purpose; belief in continuous improvement; and, appropriate structures (roles, policies, and organizational arrangements). The link between the classroom and the school is the "teacher as learner." To Fullan this means that teachers take an enquiring approach, collaborate among themselves and with administrators, constantly refine and develop new technical skills, and engage in self-learning through reflective practice. These four elements of the teacher as learner are, according to Fullan, rarely addressed all together, in the same setting.

Fullan concludes his review by arguing that the staff development strategy can succeed only when staff development is seen as "part of an overall strategy for professional and institutional reform." This implies an approach to change that is focused on changing "the culture of the school as a workplace." At this point, we have ceased considering staff development as an improvement strategy and started to view staff development as an integral part of what we will later discuss as "comprehensive restructuring."

> ***Summary: Professional Development.*** Though Fullan cites some tentative, small-scale, and/or in-process research studies that support his views, his argument is based more on identifying clearly the limits to staff development that can be seen in various applied research studies. Those studies show that staff development can be an effective tool for change, both in terms of change in teaching and improvements in learning. But, as Fullan points out, such effects are not easy to produce and there is no evidence that even when attained these outcomes generalize, leading to overall school improvement. Fullan argues that staff development must be seen as both part of a broader, school culture focused change approach and the key link in such an approach between the classroom and the school. Thus, he really rethinks and extends the professional development strategy far beyond its original domain. While Fullan's argument is clear and reasonably convincing, it is not yet backed up by anything resembling concrete data or even cases of success.

Strategy 3 — Fix the School: Developing Organizations' Capacities to Solve their Problems

This third strategy is centered on the school as an organization. The approach grew out of a practice field called "organization development" or OD. OD efforts aim to help people in organizations learn to solve their own problems more effectively. The focus is on *organizational* problems rather than problems dealing with just a part of the organization or with certain technical skills of organization members. This strategy draws mostly on the cultural perspective but often involves one or both of the other perspectives as well.

Like dissemination of innovations and staff development, OD is an applied field with a substantial research and practice literature that goes back almost fifty years (Sashkin & Burke, 1987). People in organizations work on identifying and solving their own professional/institutional problems and thereby learn to solve problems in general. This means that OD involves the collection of data to identify problems and diagnose their

causes as well as to determine whether and how well the actions designed to solve those problems actually work.

OD is based on certain values, including those of a good "quality of work life" for people and good organizational performance. OD also values the independence of the organization from outside helpers who would do people's thinking for them; this explains the emphasis on organizational learning and internal problem solving. OD promotes the use of valid information and is data-based. Thus, OD values open sharing of information as well as the data-gathering process.

OD researchers and practitioners now explicitly state that OD is about changing the organization's culture, that is, the set of shared values and beliefs held to, knowingly or not, by most or all of an organization's members. But changing culture is a difficult and long-term proposition. It typically involves the use of one or more highly skilled (and expensive) consultants who help the organization learn to identify and begin doing systematically, on their own, what must be done to improve the school. The initial learning process often extends over periods of two to five years. Even more time is often required for significant benefits to appear in overall school performance and student outcomes. It may be this factor of cost and long-term focus, more than any other, that explains the relative rarity of OD in schools.

In an extensive review of OD in schools Fullan, Miles and Taylor (1981) suggest that only when a school or district meets certain "readiness" criteria should OD be used. (Some of these criteria are openness of communication, high communication skills, a widespread desire for collaborative work, and agreement about the educational goals of restructuring.) Fullan et al. suggest that for schools that don't meet such readiness criteria other forms of OD might be developed or other, non-OD strategies for improvement might be used.

In the decade since the Fullan et al. synthesis, OD has not appreciably increased in schools, but a variety of OD-based "school improvement models" have been developed. One of the most widely-used is the "Onward to Excellence" (OTE) model developed by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL). Over a period of five years NWREL staff designed, tested, and refined a school improvement approach that creates a faculty-administrator team. This team learns to collect and interpret data and is guided through a step-wise problem solving process. Teams from many schools are trained at the same time. They receive some (but little) individual assistance and a modest amount of follow-on work.

There are many other school improvement models that share most of the attributes of Onward to Excellence. That is, they create and train teams composed of faculty and administrators. These teams become their own internal OD consultant groups. In a sense, these school improvement models are really innovations that are disseminated through a form of staff development, with considerably more than the usual degree of personal attention from the trainer/change agents. Moreover, the improvement teams not only learn to use a problem-solving model, they learn it in the context of solving real school problems that they have identified and agreed are important. In sum, these various school improvement models represent exactly what Fullan et al. called for more than a decade ago, that is, modifications of the OD approach that could be used in many or most schools.

Research by NWREL (Butler, 1989) has shown that OTE teams solve problems and achieve goals. The long term effects of OTE include positive impacts on student outcomes (such as standardized test scores). Similar results are found for other school improvement models. There are, however, at least two important weaknesses of these models. First, these OD-based approaches are not generally available. The number of school teams trained by NWREL over the past five years is in the hundreds; the number of schools in the U.S. is over 100,000. A second, related weakness is that these approaches typically target individual schools, not school districts. While there are some efforts now in process to develop analogous approaches to change at the district level, those efforts are in their infancy. The school improvement models that are most widely available, the ones that we seem best able to use, have been validated for individual schools, not districts (although a district-level version of OTE is now being tested). And, there has developed serious concern for improvement at the State level; none of the OD-based school improvement models even addresses this issue.

> ***Summary: OD and School Improvement Models.*** The descriptions provided here of OD and school improvement models are so brief that the reader is best advised to consult some of the references we have cited. Organization development, an approach to changing the culture in an organization so that the organization is better able to adapt and solve problems and also is a better place for people to work in, has been shown to "work" in schools. However, it is a costly and long-term approach that never involved more than a tiny proportion of schools. A variety of "school improvement models" (SIMs) have been developed that share some of the more important characteristics of OD. Typically, teams of faculty members and school administrators are trained to collect data, analyze their own organizational problems, and work together to develop, implement, and evaluate solutions. The chief limitations of SIMs are (1) their limited availability, and (2) their focus on just one school at a time, ignoring the district and State level.

Strategy 4 — Fix the System: Comprehensive Restructuring

Although there have been several notable efforts in the past half century to change the system or to create viable alternative schools, they tend to be isolated and limited in scope, staying power, and ultimate impact in changing systems. Only in the past five years has public and professional attention been focused on comprehensive school change or "restructuring." This fourth approach goes beyond new techniques and innovations, better teaching and more effective administration of schools, and more effective problem solving at the school building level. Comprehensive restructuring incorporates the other three strategies in a new and broader context that extends to the community, the school district, the State education agency, professional development institutions, and even the national level. And, in doing so, this new systemic redesign strategy incorporates all three of the fundamental perspectives we defined, with a special focus on cultural change.

This term, "restructuring," seems to have become the watchword of the 90s. In fact, restructuring is such a popular term that it is in real danger of becoming so widely applied to so many different things as to be meaningless. Nor is there a clear and definitive — or

even a vague and tentative — set of research findings to tell us whether (or what about) restructuring works. In a recent RAND Corporation report Lorraine McDonnell (1990) says, "The current state of research knowledge is insufficient to establish a causal link — or even an empirical one in some cases — between [restructuring] and student outcomes."

Yet, after reviewing hers and several other very current reports we are of the mind that there is an underlying coherence to the concept of restructuring. We find various researchers and practitioners repeating the same factors as basic elements in a restructuring approach to school improvement. Even more important, we see in this approach the application of many hard-learned lessons, coming from the experience of trying to implement one or more of the previous three approaches.

Can we provide a definition? None fully captures all of the meanings and values being associated with restructuring. One that is relatively simple, is:

> ***Restructuring involves changes in roles, rules, and relationships between and among students and teachers, teachers and administrators, and administrators at various levels from the school building to the district office to the State level, all with the aim of improving student outcomes.***

What, then, is the nature of the change? What are the specific and concrete "components" of restructuring? At least four are referred to consistently in the recent literature. *First,* and perhaps most important, restructuring means decentralizing authority. That is, devolving authority from the State to the district, from the district to the school building, and from building administrators to teachers — "pushing decision making down to the lowest appropriate level in the system." This is often called "site-based management" or SBM. SBM means much more than just delegating authority to lower levels of the system. Most of all, it implies the existence of a coherent system. Thus, roles and relationships between the school and the district and the district and the State education agency are not done away with; they are changed in fundamental ways. Two recent research reports on SBM (David, 1989; Hill & Bonan, 1991) point out that the district plays a crucial role and that district support and leadership is more important to successful change than many of the operational details of SBM in a particular school.

Second, and intertwined with SBM, is a basic change in accountability. SBM does not imply laissez-faire on the part of individual schools. Rather, SBM provides authority consistent with responsibility. It is an important part of the district's and the SEA's role to define at least some of the parameters of school site responsibility. Timar (1989), reviewing three different approaches at the State level, finds the most effective approach involves "changing the way that schools do business. Improving organizational competence . . ." This means "political interaction" by articulating broad State policy goals that can be met by discretionary authority and local flexibility. In this way State policy goals are integrated with local conditions and practices.

Timar (1989) uses the South Carolina approach as his successful example. In this case "the State required schools to provide remedial instruction to students functioning below grade level but left it to the schools to decide how to best organize those programs." A recent

report by the Education Commission of the States (1991) puts it more generally, noting that State policy should provide for "the development of a shared vision and comprehensive strategic plan." Thus, there is a leadership vision that defines strategic aims while SBM empowers people at the local level to act to address those aims in ways that work. (In contrast to the South Carolina example, Timar details two other examples that he concludes failed, California's permissive decentralized strategy and the Texas policy approach of rational planning and regulation.)

The ECS report does not tell how accountability policies should change, just that they must. Hill and Bonan (1991) agree that States "must find ways of holding schools accountable without dominating local decisions or standardizing practice. The basis of a site-managed school's accountability . . . [is] not its compliance with procedural requirements." They suggest that "the ultimate accountability mechanism is parental choice." McDonnell (1990) is less certain, suggesting that out of the set of bureaucratic, political, professional, and market (parental choice) forms of accountability there needs to be developed some new, hybrid form.

This change in accountability relates to a set of changes in the "governance" of schools. Murphy (1990) refers to these changes as voice and choice, involving three specific elements. "First, restructuring schools empower parents and community members. . . . Second, they expand the school community — they unite parents, professional educators, businesses, universities, foundations, the general populace into a collective force dedicated to the improvement of schooling for all children. Third, the notion of parental choice is thoroughly intertwined in discussions about transforming the relationship between schools and their communities." In sum, two key aspects of restructuring involve giving people at the school-site level authority that is equal to their responsibility while, at the same time, being tempered and checked by real accountability, defined in a variety of ways and ensured by various means.

There are two other commonly-stated aspects of restructuring. Both involve additional changes in roles, rules, and relationships. One is **curriculum restructuring** or "alignment." That is, new, more integrated and cohesive curricula must be developed. They must fit or be in alignment both with the aims of schooling and with one another. Tied to this are changes in **instruction**, especially a new emphasis on the student instead of the delivery system. Instruction becomes less teacher-centered and more student focused, less generic and more personalized, less competitive and more cooperative. Murphy (1990) defines three aspects of these changes in curriculum and instruction as (a) mastery or outcome-based learning, (b) developmentally-based learning, and (c) the personalization of learning. He calls the new system "teaching for understanding."

Obviously related, even requisite, is the concept of teacher empowerment, of professionalization. This means more formal decisionmaking influence in the school but, more important, it means a larger role in defining the work of teaching as well as major changes in the design of teachers' work. Note, then, how the same concept and approach to staff development discussed by Fullan (1990) is woven into this concept of restructuring. Note, too, that the sort of approach to school improvement we identified as derived from OD is a basic element of restructuring, seen here as site-based management. Even the

technical innovations featured in the strategy we discussed first, "Transfer and Implementation of Program Innovations," are contained within the restructuring approach.

Significant systemic changes in education require a working consensus on the need and direction for change. Practical guidance on approaches to mobilizing a broad consensus on needed actions can be found in reports such as those authored by Hill, et al. (1989) and by Glassman (1989), describing efforts in major cities. Help that is especially useful for those working toward comprehensive restructuring at the state level is contained in the report by the Commission on Maine's Common Core of Learning (1990). This report describes a sequential state-wide and community-by-community approach to creating a consensus on the need for comprehensive change. Building this sort of consensus and developing support for fundamental change is not a simple task but it is being accomplished, as in Maine, and it can be done elsewhere, through informed and effective leadership and major commitments of time and patience.

> *Summary: Comprehensive Change/Restructuring.* This approach builds on and incorporates not just the other three but their underlying strategic foundations. We see *innovative technical knowledge use* combined with *staff development* in the context of a *school improvement approach* that is multi-level, involving not only the school, the district, and the State agency but reaching out as well to create *cultural change* in the community.
>
> Restructuring does not simply emphasize one or another of the perspectives defined by House (1981). While based on the cultural perspective, it incorporates both the rational-scientific and the political perspectives. The restructuring approach holds real promise for successful change in schools. It represents a synthesis of practice knowledge about educational change that is at the heart of the New American Schools concept. While it is too early to cite definitive research on this approach, it seems to us to hold the most hope for successful reform.

A Synthesis — Directions and Implications

Our approach in this review has been to provide a broad-brush overview of efforts to improve schools over the past thirty years. We recognize that we have neglected many "details" that are far from trivial (especially to those who were directly involved), yet we hope to have succeeded in giving the reader a reasonably accurate overview of the conceptual and pragmatic history of research-based educational change. In concluding, we shall take our overview approach still farther, using the now-common metaphor of "waves of reform." Again, we explicitly acknowledge that our sketch is only that, an effort to communicate the broad outlines of the processes of change as we see it.

It has been said that we are in the midst of a "third wave" of education reform. The first wave, in the 1960s and early 70s, centered on the first approach we discussed and was based on the rational-scientific strategy (with certain social system knowledge-based modifications). It was a failure, absent the sort of resources needed to create a national "educational extension system," on the model of the Agricultural Extension Service, or

develop other market mechanisms to link knowledge producers with users. In short, significant change does not occur on the basis of the "brute sanity" of the rational-empirical model alone. But we came away with substantial knowledge, and a modest and effective way for making relatively small scale program innovations widely available and usable — the National Diffusion Network.

By the end of the 1970s it was clear that the first wave efforts had failed. It then seemed almost as though those in powerful positions, seeing this failure, said, "We gave you social scientists all this money, to no effect. By gosh, we'll just make them do it." Enter the second wave of educational reform, in the late 1970s and early 80s. The second wave was distinguished by State-level mandates for change, often legislated; it was no more effective than the first wave reforms. Passing a law or issuing a requirement does not necessarily make people obey the law or meet the requirement. McLaughlin (1990) observes in retrospect, and we agree, that it is possible to create change by sheer force, by mandate and monitoring. Our own view is that while enough force will push the camel through the needle's eye, the camel is not likely to be very healthy or productive afterwards. Still, there was much learned from the various attempts to implement this approach. There have been important and effective lessons on how to link policy instruments with technical and cultural requirements for improving school performance.

And despite the failure of top-down mandated "improvement," the strategy did emphasize an important truth, the need for a systemic and not just a "local" approach. The OD approach, based on the cultural change perspective, also failed, in part because of its narrow focus on the individual school. More than a decade ago Miles (1980), a pioneer in using the OD approach, reported on the fate of six innovative schools, all new public schools that had been created from the ground up. They were all failures, more or less. Eleven years later Miles (1991) pointed out, ". . . strategies such as organization development . . . can clearly be helpful. But in many urban settings little can be done to make significant improvements in the absence of some autonomy and some control over staffing and resources, along with administrative stability and real support from the central office. So working on internal conditions may be only palliative. Urban schools need major political and structural reforms (such as decentralization and school-based management) that provide schools with the real opportunity to control their futures. *Those conditions must be created at the district office or State level.*"

We have all learned a great deal over the past decade. The literature we have reviewed here includes some remarkably consistent and clear findings across the half-century since Paul Mort began serious work on school change through the Columbia University Teachers College Metropolitan Schools Study Council (Mort, 1964). Even before the current set of "waves" of educational reform began, the Ford Foundation's Comprehensive School Improvement Program was charting the issues that others have sought to clarify in many improvement efforts since then (Ford Foundation, 1972). For example, reports by Hill, Wise, and Shapiro (1989), Glennan (1989), and the Commission of Maine's Common Core of Learning (1990) describe successful approaches to a fundamental problem identified in the Ford Foundation program, that of building and sustaining a broad base of community commitment and support for systemic change efforts in schools. Deal (1975) was optimistic in his analysis of why the alternative secondary schools movement of the 1960s failed. He

predicted that on the basis of what was learned from such efforts, better prepared leaders could succeed in future structural reform efforts.

During this same period there has been an important and encouraging shift in how "resistance to change" is viewed and treated. Such resistance, initially dealt with by perjorative name-calling, has come to be addressed by constructive responses and, most recently, is seen as a naturally occuring issue that must and can be dealt with. Turnbull (1991) brings together strands of work that have contributed to this shift.

A major tool that has contributed to research and improved management of change in school settings is the Concerns Based Adoptive Model (CBAM). This tool was developed in the early 1970s at the University of Texas Research and Development Center for Teacher Education (Hall, et al., 1975). CBAM is a systematic approach for finding and fixing barriers to adoption and effective use of "fix-the-parts" technical innovations in schools. It helps users to become actively and effectively engaged in implementing innovations, starting with gaining access to information and leading, step by step, to operational use. Training in the use of CBAM, and other related change management tools, is now widely available. CBAM has broad applicability that goes beyond the successful introduction of one or another technical innovation. It can help people understand and control many of the factors that stimulate or stifle effective change in schools. CBAM empowers people to make change while supporting their rational assessment of needs and means and, perhaps most important, bringing them together to deal with change as an organized group. It is, then, a tool for integrating the three perspectives on change that we initially defined (reason, political power, and organizational culture) and making them work in concert to support effective school change.

Each of the three "single-dimension" strategies we have defined — fix the parts, fix the people, and fix the school — has been shown to work to improve education, at least to a degree and under certain conditions; all are potentially useful. Combinations, we found out early on, can be even more effective. But change based on either one or some combination of these strategies is incremental, at best, is often temporary, and is sometimes totally absent — or even for the worse (Sieber, 1981). In themselves, the three "pure" strategies do not directly address problems of context, of environment, and of the larger system of which the school is but a part. These are structural problems and issues, and that is why the third wave is called restructuring. These structural problems easily impede change, even when undertaken with vigor, great effort, and much money. We have seen that even then educational change is hard to achieve and harder to sustain.

Finally, we have a new, third wave of educational reform. Cynics comment that its only effect will be to break on the rocks, like its predecessors. And yet we believe that this new, third wave has a much greater chance of success. We have learned, at least in concept, how to undertake effective educational change. It is culture based, but combines elements of both political force and scientific-technical innovation. We have learned from past failures, and from research, that an approach to educational change must take a broad, systemic approach that involves structural change. This is done by allowing and attaining autonomy at the school-site level, by building strong school cultures that foster professional (and student) growth and development, that encourage innovation and constant improvement,

and that are accountable for their results. This "ideal" condition can be approximated, if not fully attained, when there is a stable and supportive political consensus in the community affected, be it local, State, or national. And we believe it can be sustained if, under those conditions, educators are adequately prepared and motivated as professionals to continually strengthen and improve the technical core of content and pedagogy they use to advance student learning. A tall order, but it is important and the knowledge base exists to do it.

Yet, unless education reformers and practitioners at all levels are aware and make use of some of the important lessons from the history of previous efforts, all bets are off. We can't dither at this time over fine points, but if our designs for New American Schools and our efforts to create New American Communities are based on quick impressions and seat of the pants judgments uninformed by the lessons of history, a great opportunity will probably be lost in the 1990s as history repeats itself.

Why should the current, third wave of educational reform be any more successful than the prior two? Because not only do we know far more now about how to produce change in schools, there is also a broad and powerful social mandate for it. At the national level the President's AMERICA 2000 education strategy provides a powerful focus on a clear and agreed-upon set of goals, developed consensually with the Nation's Governors. The Governors re-commit to those goals — and their achievement — in the recent publication reporting progress in restructuring our education system, ***From Rhetoric to Action*** (National Governors' Association, 1991). AMERICA 2000 encompasses a strong set of approaches for achieving those goals.

The new wave of education reform is promising because for the first time it brings together the technical knowledge needed for improvement with a locally-sensitive yet systemic education strategy, AMERICA 2000. No one is saying it will be quick or easy, but AMERICA 2000 builds on what is known, with a start-up phase that wisely provides time for developing and testing new designs for American schools, designs constructed specifically to focus on and achieve a set of consensual National Education Goals. The strategy is based on a clear vision of what needs to be done and what AMERICA 2000 Communities can do. Most important, it is driven by the determination of those at the National, State, and local levels to make it happen.

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